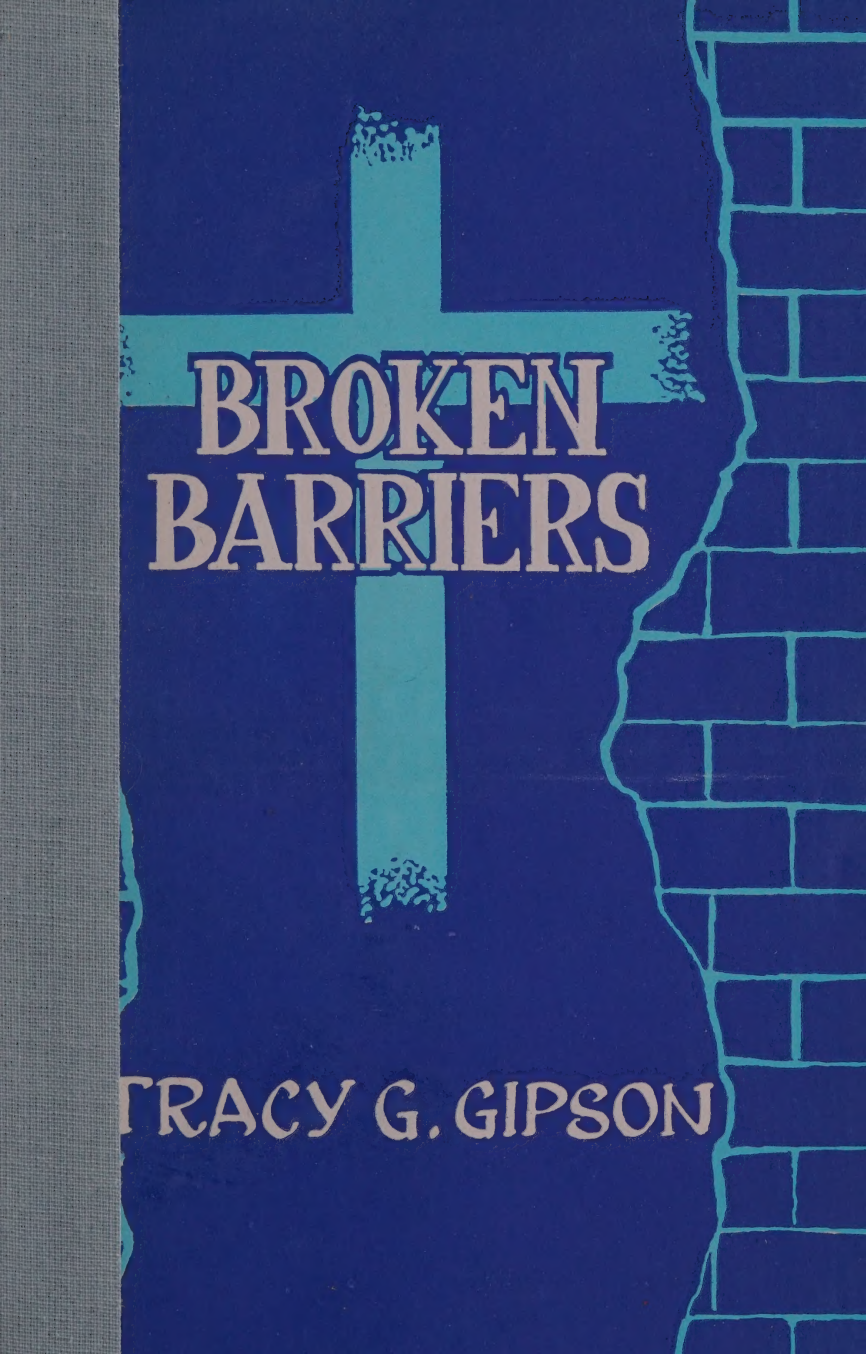


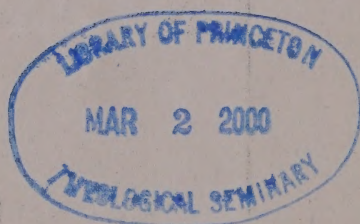
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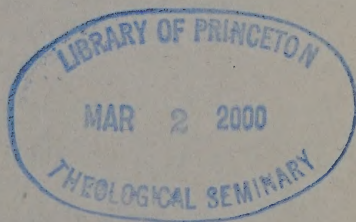
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A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

BY

TRACY GREER GIPSON



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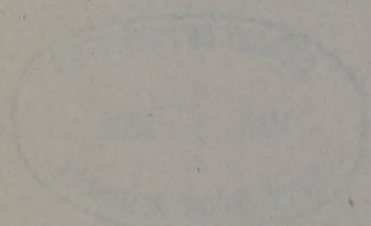
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BROKEN BARRIERS

A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

BY

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BROKEN BARRIERS

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come to the city of Rome from Asia Minor on some business or perhaps to bring gifts from the Christians of Asia Minor to aid Paul with his expenses in prison. Tychichus may have left from Colossae. Paul wanted to send some word of exhortation to the church there and so wrote the letter to the Colossians. Then, since there was still time before Tychichus was to leave, Paul decided to expand the thoughts in the letter to the Colossians, and write a letter to be circulated to all of the churches in Asia Minor. Since Paul had spent a longer time at Ephesus than anywhere else in Asia Minor, it was only natural that when the letter got to Ephesus the church there would preserve it, either by making a copy to keep or by keeping the original and sending on a copy to other churches in the area.

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION AND THE CHURCH

Prologue

Let us now turn to the letter itself. The first verse is Paul's own introduction of himself to the readers of the letter. He said that he was "chosen by God to be Jesus Christ's messenger" (Living Bible). The choosing took place on the Damascus road. The sending out was done by the church at Antioch under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2). In this first verse he also mentions to whom the letter was written "to the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus" (RSV) "to God's people who are faithful in their life in union with Christ Jesus". (TEV).

Then comes Paul's wish or blessing for these people. "May God our father give you Grace and Peace". These have been called the two great words of our Christian faith. Because of God's generous heart of love, we who are so undeserving of redemption and forgiveness are saved. We have not earned nor deserved this free gift of God. Paul reminds us in Vs. 2:8 Grace is this gift of God.

Paul asks that his hearers may receive the peace which comes from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 14:27 Jesus makes a great promise to his followers "Peace I leave with you, my own peace I give you". The Greek word for peace is *eirēnē* which is used to translate the Hebrew word *shalōm* which we use daily here in India. For the Jew *shalōm* meant everything that was needed for man's highest good. When Jesus said "My own peace I give you" he was thus saying that he was giving his followers the same goodness which he had. Man's highest good comes only through Jesus—this is why Jesus said "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life" (Jn. 14:6)

So Paul opens his letter by wishing the two greatest blessings it is possible for man to receive. God's grace and peace as given through Christ.

A. What Christ has Done for Us :

The next section of this chapter (vs. 3-14) is one long meandering sentence in Greek. Paul's sentence flows on and on because as he considers the meaning of Christ in his own life, he can not stop the joyous song of praise which pours forth from his heart. The reason for this was that Paul could never get over the amazing change in his life that had come after he found Jesus Christ. Paul knew that amazing things, wonderful things, happened to those who accept Christ. Let us look at some of these special things that come to us through Jesus Christ.

First of all Paul reminds us of the blessings that have come into our lives through Jesus Christ. In 1:3 he says, "for in our union with Christ he has blessed us by giving every spiritual gift in the heavenly world." There are two ideas in this verse that we need to look at carefully.

First of all the idea of God's blessing us. From Old Testament times God's people have understood that life without God's blessing was life without real meaning. In Genesis 12:7 we read that God promised to bless Abram and in Genesis 17:4-5 we read of that promise being fulfilled in the covenant God made with the changed man Abraham. In I Kings 3 we read of King Solomon, shortly after his coronation going to the High Place at Gibeon to seek God's blessing. Solomon asked for an understanding mind so that he could govern God's people and God granted this blessing.

The story of Solomon reminds us that Paul taught that spiritual gifts are given by God so that we might better serve others. In I Cor, 12:7 Paul writes "to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good." (RSV) Again in Romans 12:6 he writes "having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them: if prophecy in proportion to our faith; if service in our serving; he who teaches in his teaching; he who exhorts in his exhortation; he who contributes in liberality; he who gives aid with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

From these two passages it is evident that Paul understood that the blessing of spiritual gifts was to be used for the whole church.

We must not disregard these blessings received from Jesus Christ. In Proverbs 10:22 we read that "the Lord's blessing is our greatest wealth; all our work adds nothing to it." (Living Bible).

Another "special thing" that God has done through Jesus Christ is to bring us to himself as his sons and daughters (Eph.1:5). Paul goes on to say that this was God's pleasure and purpose. Because of God's love for us through Jesus Christ we have been adopted into the family of God. Paul tells us in Galatians 4:5 "But when the right time finally came God sent his own son." He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish Law to set free those who were under the Law so that they might become God's sons. This is why Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Our Father who art in heaven."

Through Jesus mankind has been given the opportunity to establish a new, familiar relation with God. The Creator of the universe the punisher of sinners, the avenger and righteous God of the Old Testament revealed himself through Christ to be a loving heavenly Father seeking the salvation of all. But Paul does not stop his torrent of praise with this thought, great as it is.

He goes on in verses 7 and 8 to remind us that "by the death of Christ we are set free and our sins are forgiven, How great is the grace of God which he has given us in such large measure." (TEV)

The word translated "set free" in the TEV and "redemption" in the RSV comes from a Greek word which means to ransom a prisoner of war or a slave. This is the word used in the Greek O.T. for God's "deliverance" of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the cruel power of Pharaoh.

Wherever this word is used in Greek it is used to speak of setting free a person from a situation from which he was powerless to free himself.

In Jesus' day all of mankind was striving to save themselves from the despair and fear that living in a world they did not fully understand brought them. The most sensitive minds of the pagan world of that day, the Stoics, knew that they were gripped by something from which they were helpless to free themselves.

Even Paul, that Hebrew of Hebrews, who had sat at the feet of Gamaliel the most eminent rabbi of that time, thinking of his situation cried out "wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24-RSV) Paul found the answer to this question as a Christian - "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Paul found that what the law could not do Christ did do -redeem him from the body of death! Not for Paul only my friends -that fact of the First Century is still a fact in the Twentieth Century. Praise God! People are still finding redemption through Jesus Christ. Pick up any issue of *Decision Magazine* and you find thrilling testimonies as to how Christ has redeemed broken lives. Walk with me through the villages of Andhra Pradesh and listen to simple village Christians testify concerning the redemption they have found in Christ. People who were once regarded as no people now have become the children of God.

I wish you could have been present at the Good Friday service in one of the Baptist Churches in Hyderabad and heard a prominent city doctor testify before more than 900 people present how Christ had redeemed and saved and brought healing to his life which had been meaningless for him up until then.

But these verses speak not only of redemption but also of forgiveness. One without the other is not enough. This is why Paul in his letter to Philemon plead with Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Paul was ready to stand good for Onesimus' redemption - to ransom him if necessary - but he knew that was not enough. Onesimus needed forgiveness as well as redemption so Paul wrote to Philemon pleading that he would forgive Onesimus and take him back, not just as a slave, but as his brother in Christ, If the relationship was to be restored forgiveness must be shown by Philemon to Onesimus.

Just so Paul tells us in these two verses, that because of "the riches of His Grace" redemption and forgiveness are given to us by God through Jesus Christ. The two go hand in hand. When we come to God through Christ we are not only redeemed but our sins are forgiven. Its no wonder that Paul exhorts us in verse 6 "Let us praise God for his glorious grace for the free gift he gave us in his dear son!" (TEV) As we continue reading we find Paul rejoicing for still another reason. He rejoices because through Christ Jews and Gentiles—indeed all of the people of the world—can join together in praising God for the salvation shown to all men. Paul elaborates this idea in the second chapter which we will deal with later. It is sufficient here to say that Christ with his own body has broken down the wall that separated men from each other (See 2:14).

Through Christ people of the world are enabled to forget their differences and know each other as brothers and sisters. We have a demonstration of this in this meeting of the first Asian Baptist Congress which has brought together people from all over the world. Some of us learned in Sunday School a song that puts the matter plainly.

"Red and Yellow, black and white
All are precious in His sight."

Yes, Jesus loves all of the people of the world. Christianity thus became the first universal religion. As Paul says in vs. 10 "God's plan, which he will reveal when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth with Christ as its head." (TEV)

This is the Good News our World needs today, just as it was the Good News needed in Paul's day. For our world is divided. Nations are rising against nations—communist countries have taken to fighting each other! Unfortunately Christians have been fighting with one another for hundreds of years! If man is to survive on this earth he must become united with his fellow men. The world has become so small and the peoples of the world so interdependent that mankind can no longer afford the luxury of divisiveness which heaps up tragedy upon tragedy.

Paul brings this magnificent sentence to a close by saying that the guarantee of our inheritance from Christ is the Holy Spirit which is given as a seal. "The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people and assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his." 1:14 (TEV). William Barclay puts the matter plainly when he writes "The possession of the Holy Spirit is the seal and sign that a man belongs to God."

The Jerusalem church understood this from the very beginning. When the Christians in Jerusalem heard that many in Samaria had believed on Jesus as a result of Philip's teaching and had been baptized but had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit they were alarmed and sent Peter and John. "When they arrived they prayed for the believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit..... Then Peter and John placed their hands upon them and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:15, 17-TEV). It was the normal thing for the early Christians to experience the power and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

B. Paul's Prayer for the Believers:

The final section of chapter I contains a beautiful prayer of Paul for the Christians to whom he was writing.

It was characteristic of Paul that he constantly prayed for his fellow Christians. In the first chapter of Romans as well as I and II Corinthians he speaks of remembering God's people in his prayers. Do we regularly remember God's people in our prayers? Are we concerned about the church in other places and other lands? Paul was, and he not only prayed but wrote letters to show his concern.

In vs. 15 we find further evidence that his letter was not addressed to Ephesus alone. The words "ever since I heard of your faith in in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people" implies a second hand knowledge of the people to whom he was writing but Paul's knowledge of the Christians at Ephesus was first hand.

In this section Paul mentions several things for which he has been praying on their behalf—Paul had specific requests to make to God for the people for whom he prayed.

First of all in vs. 17 he says that he asked God, the heavenly Father, "to give the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you." (TEV) Paul was certain that without the gift of the Holy Spirit no one could understand the scriptures nor really come to know God. So he asked for the gift of the Spirit for all who knew Christ.

Secondly in vs. 18 Paul says that he is praying "that their minds may be opened to the light." John tells us in his Gospel that John the Baptist came to tell men about the light and in the 3rd chapter of John he reminds us that in Jesus "the light has come into the world" (Jn. 3:19). Jesus himself said that he was the light of the world. The light which Jesus brought helps us to know ourselves and something of the future he has called us to share.

Paul had a reason for praying thus. He knew that without the light which Christ brought, men were without hope. After coming into Christ's light men not only are now filled with hope but know the richness of the blessings which God gives to his people through Christ. Secondly Paul knew that the light of Christ in our lives reveals to us how great is the power of Christ at work in us. Paul is so bold as to say that this power is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. In other words, it is God's power and because God has willed it all things have been placed under the power and authority of Jesus Christ. And lest any should question this power Paul states boldly in vs. 21 that Christ rules from heaven and is above "all titles of power in this world and the next."

Finally Paul closes the first chapter by reminding us of the wondrous fact that the church is Christ's body and the completion of all things everywhere. I like the way the living bible puts this phrase "the Author and giver of everything everywhere."

Paul says here what John said later in the prologue to his gospel: "Through him God made all things. God made nothing without him." (Jn. 1:3)

Questions for Discussion :

1. Paul is addressing Gentiles, so how would his approach differ from a letter written to Jews ?

2. Here in Asia we are all members of the minority community. Our neighbours may be members of another religious community or they may pride themselves on being secular, scientific and free from the superstitions of religion. Let's have some ideas of how you would address your neighbours ?

3. Paul prayed for the people. He thanked God for them and he prayed that they might have God's blessing and power. How can we enrich our own prayer lives ? A Christian who had been imprisoned for Christ's sake said, "How can a Christian ever leave the throne of grace without praying for all the Christians in the world who are now suffering for Christ's sake ?" Now, if you have had an experience that has changed and enriched your prayer life will you please share it with us ?

4. Do you think Paul's ideas were too difficult for the ordinary Christian to struggle with ? It has been said, "Just live according to the Sermon on the Mount and don't worry about theology." Do you agree ? If not, what values have you found in studying Paul ?

CHAPTER II

GOD'S NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

A. From Death to Life :

Paul begins the second chapter of Ephesians by contrasting the situation his readers were in before they knew Christ with the situation they now enjoy.

In verses 1 to 3 he describes the fate of all who live only according to their natural desires. Here he reminds us of how terrible life without Christ was for both the Gentiles and the Jews alike. In verse 1 he speaks of sins and trespasses. The Greek word he used for sin is *hamartia* which means "missing the mark." What a description of life being lived by hundred of thousands of people alive today! Life lived without real purpose and outside the will of God misses the mark completely. This is to fail to be what God wants us to be, in short to be "spiritually dead." The second thing mentioned by Paul is "trespasses". This translates the Greek word *paraptōma* which means "to slip or fall". Paul says that mankind has slipped from the path of righteousness has fallen away from the life God intended his people to live.

This "missing the mark", this "falling away" means but one thing: natural man is spiritually dead. The chief reason for the appalling condition of the world in which we live is the killing power of sin in the lives of so many of the world's people. The stench of spiritual death hangs over the world because of the corrupting murderous power of sin.

Elsewhere in Romans 7:24 Paul expresses the despair of all men. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of death?" (RSV). There in Romans and here in Ephesians Paul points to the same answer — man cannot deliver himself from the power of sin in his life but God can and does through Jesus. The Today's English Version puts it beautifully (2:45).

"But God's mercy is so abundant and his love for us is so great that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience he brought us to life through Jesus."

For Paul this was a surprising thing. In Romans 5:7 he exalts! "But God has shown how much he loves us — it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!" (TEV) According to Jewish teaching a man had to be deserving before he could experience the grace of God in his life. Those who were not deserving had no place in God's salvation plan. Paul could not get over God's grace at work in his life. In I Cor. 15:9,10 he wrote "For I am the least of the Apostles—I do not even deserve to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted God's church. But by God's grace I am what I am." (TEV)

No wonder that Paul speaks of God's abundant mercy and his great love; he had experienced them in his own life! This is the crux of the matter of being a Christian — only when we actually experience God's grace in our lives do we know what it is to be a Christian. And, as Paul found out for himself this experience comes only when we throw ourselves on God's love and depend completely on His mercy.

Paul says that in our union with Christ God raises us up with him (vs. 6). God raises us from the life of degradation and shame to rule with Christ in the heavenly world. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is repeated in the life of the believer — God brought us from death to life through Jesus Christ. And what is the reason for all of this? Paul in vs. 7 says that this resurrection experience, this redemption from death to a new life is given by God to "demonstrate for all time to come the extraordinary greatness of his grace in the love he showed us in Christ Jesus." (TEV). Paul uses a strong word here variously translated "extraordinary greatness", "surpassing riches", "immeasurable riches", "how infinitely rich" to describe the measure of God's grace shown to sinful mankind. Perhaps thinking of his own unworthiness, or considering the terrible sins that marked the world in which he lived Paul stood amazed at God's grace. "...Where sin increased God's grace increased even more." Rom. 5:20b (TEV). Truly the abounding grace of God astonishes all who are touched by it. Of one thing Paul was certain — only God's infinite grace could deal with the sin which he saw all around him.

Paul knew from his own bitter experience that man is saved not by good works but only by God's grace. We can not earn our salvation no matter how hard we try. This is why Martin Luther speaking of his experience in the Augustinian monastery said "if ever a monk got to heaven through his monkery I should have been the man, I would have been a martyr through fasting, prayer, reading and other good works had I remained a monk much longer."

So Paul tells us plainly in vs. 8 "It is not your own doing, but God's gift." As far as salvation is concerned no man can boast he has earned it himself. Paul and Luther and a host of others found that they could not make themselves worthy of salvation in God's sight. God knew this and out of his love sent Jesus Christ to do for man what man could not do for himself.

However, simply because man can not earn his salvation through good works does not mean that we should not do good works. In verse 10 Paul tells us that "in our union with Christ Jesus he (God) has created us for a life of good deeds which he has already prepared for us to do."

William Barclay calls this the "Pauline Paradox". Though we spend a life time trying to get right with God through good deeds we are unable to come to the place where we are deserving of God's love. No child can deserve the love of his parents but that child can and should show appreciation for the love shown him by his parents. Parents long to see their children respond to the love they have shown to them by being the kind of children the parents want them to be. Exactly so with God. When he showed his love for us through Jesus Christ he hoped and desired that this love at work in our lives would compel us to carry out his will in the world.

Jesus said "If you love me you will obey my commandments." It is this love in our hearts that creates the desire to do good works to glorify God. It is this love that makes us men and women serving others for Christ.

Paul concludes this section of the chapter by reminding us that the change in our lives is made so that we want to be kind

and considerate, loving and helpful in God's work. He has created us for a life of Good works. Elsewhere in II Cor. 5:17 Paul tells us that when any one is joined to Christ he is a new being, the old is gone, the new has come." (TEV) It is this new man who lets his light shine so that men seeing his good works, will glorify God.

B. A New Humanity in Christ :

We now come to the section (vs. 11-21) of the letter to the Ephesians which has been chosen for special study and meditation by those attending the First Asian Baptist Congress. At the beginning of this section Paul reminds us of the condition of the Gentiles before the coming of Jesus. The last part of the section speaks of the great change that came to the Gentiles who accepted Jesus Christ. Let us look at the vivid comparison he makes between the two conditions.

In their original situation Paul says that "you were foreigners, and did not belong to God's chosen people. You had no part in the covenants which were based on God's promises to his people. You lived in the world without hope and without God." (TEV) The Jews used the word "foreigner" with the same utter contempt the orthodox Hindu used the word "Pharengi" (foreigner) a century ago. Some of the Jewish teachers went so far as to say that God created the Gentiles to provide fuel for the fires of hell. They avoided as far as possible all contact with foreigners; the foreigner was completely beyond the pale. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was absolute. So when Paul called the Gentile "foreigners" he was saying the worst thing a Jew could say about any one.

Secondly, Paul says that they did not belong to God's chosen people. (vs. 13) Not only were the Gentiles estranged from God's people, the Jews, but they were also estranged from God himself. Alienated from God's people and from God—can we imagine any worse condition for men than this?

But Paul does not stop here in his description of the Gentiles before they knew Christ. He says that they "had no part in the Covenants which were based on God's promises to his people."

(vs. 12b, TEV) The Jews believed that the whole basis for their relationship with God was bound up in the covenants that God had made with Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and others. They believed that without a covenant there could be no real relationship with God. So when Paul says that the Gentiles had no share in the covenants he was really saying that they had no chance of fellowshiping with God or receiving any kind of help from Him.

Alienated from God's people and from God and with no share in the covenants added up to one thing for Paul. This is reflected in the closing part of verse 12 where Paul writes: "you lived in a world without hope without God."

Paul was not making an idle comment here; he was reflecting the basic attitude of many of the Greek philosophers and writers of his time. Sophocles, the great Greek dramatist reflected this attitude of hopelessness when he wrote:

"Youth's beauty fades and manhood's glory fades.
Youth dies and unfaith blossoms as a flower;
Nor ever will thou find upon the open street of man,
Or the secret places of the heart's own love
One wind that blows true forever."

Yes, it was true that the Gentiles of Paul's day were without hope and without God. Just as many of the intelligentsia in Asia today have lost all faith in the old gods, so it was true in Paul's day that many Gentiles were without hope because they had lost faith in the old gods and did not know the true God. In spite of their literary, artistic and philosophical accomplishments, the Greeks were a people living without hope. This is why some of the followers of Epicurus adopted as their motto "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die." But the Jewish situation was different. In spite of all that had happened to them they were still the people with a great hope.

What a picture of desperation and despair Paul draws of the situation the Gentiles faced in his day! Honesty compels us to admit that this is a picture which portrays the situation that millions of people in our world face today. After two world wars and experi-

ments with Socialism and Communism and Democracy many people are saying there is no hope for mankind. It is just a matter of time before we blow the world up with the bomb or make it unliveable with pollution or starve to death because of the population explosion. Truly man seems both hopeless and helpless to deal with his own situation!

However Paul refuses to leave his readers in despair. He goes on in verse 13 to proclaim the great news that man may still hope. "But now, in union with Christ Jesus, you who used to be far away have been brought near by the death of Christ." (TEV) The terms "far away" and "near" were euphemisms for Gentile and Jew. Barclay reminds us that when the Rabbis accepted a convert into Judaism they said that that person had been *brought near*.

In Jewish thinking only the chosen people could draw near to God, the Gentiles had to stand at a distance. So in the temple at Jerusalem the outer courtyard was called the courtyard of the Gentiles while the inner courtyards were reserved for the Jews. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that any Gentile who dared to step inside the inner courtyard was liable to be punished by death. Just as formerly only high caste Hindus could enter into the temples of and draw near to their deities while the lower castes were excluded, so it was with Jews and Gentiles in the temple at Jerusalem. We remember from Acts 21:28,29 that Paul's arrest by the Jews at Jerusalem was due to his being wrongly accused of having taken the Ephesian Gentile Christian, Trophimus, beyond the barrier between the Gentile and Jewish courtyards.

But the Jews were not the only ones to erect barriers against the foreigners. The Greeks called everyone a barbarian who did not speak Greek, and barbarians were their enemies by nature. They looked down on everyone who did not speak Greek, as being inferior. Plato taught that the barbarians, that is the non-Greeks, were "our enemies by nature." The Greek regarded non-Greeks as living on a lower level of life and put up social barriers against these inferior people.

Paul says that this wall separating Jews and Gentiles has been broken by Jesus Christ. Jesus did this by abolishing, through his

death on the cross, the Jewish Law with its commandments and rules which kept men apart and which gave the Jews a favoured status. In place of the Jewish Law he gave men the divine law "love one another as I have loved you", and the Golden Rule, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Thus he has paved the way for peace among the peoples of the world.

But not only has Jesus paved the way for peace — Paul says that "he *is* our peace." He alone is able to bring the peace that men long for. He alone can form strong bonds of love which help us forget differences and hold us together in a world-wide fellowship. He alone can bring peace between us and God. Yes, praise God, *Jesus is our peace!*

Paul also boldly states that this unity was brought by Christ abolishing the law which divided men by creating a new people in union with himself (Vs. 15) Paul says that Jesus makes a new kind of person out of both Jew and Greek and as new persons they are reconciled to God and one another. As the Living Bible puts it "He took the two groups who had been opposed to each other and made them parts of himself; thus he fused us together to become one new person."

Then Paul reminds us of the great price Jesus had to pay in order to give us this peace (Vs. 16). "By his death on the cross Jesus destroyed their enmity; by means of the cross he united both races into one body and brought them back to God." (TEV) It was Paul's firm conviction that Jew and Gentile Christians had equal rights to membership in the church. The reason for this is that the condition for entry into the church is the same for both Jew and Gentile - faith in Jesus Christ who gave himself as a sacrifice for the sins of Jews and Gentiles alike. Since Christ died for the sins of all men, Jew and Gentile find the same path into the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ. This theme found here, is also the theme of both Galatians and Romans. Since both Jews and God offered to mankind a salvation that in no way depends on the Law of Moses. (Read Gal. 2:16 and Romans 3:21b).

In the final verses of this chapter Paul expresses his great ideas about the reconciling power of the cross of Christ in the lives of

those who believe. In Vs. 16 Paul states plainly that all differences of class and color and race are dissolved when men stand in the presence of the crucified Christ. *By means of the Cross* Christ can and does bring unity out of diversity. People are compelled to forget their differences as they stand in awe and wonder before the awful sacrifice Jesus Christ made on the cross for them.

In vs. 17 Paul is even more specific about the real mission of our Lord here on earth. He says that "Christ came and preached the Good News of peace to all, to you Gentiles who were far away from God and to the Jews who were near to him." (TEV) Paul sees Jesus' mission as one of reconciling us to God. If we read other passages such as Romans 5:6-11; II Cor. 5:17-21 and Col. 1:20-23 we can understand the beauty and strength of Paul's interpretation of the cross in this way.

But notice that Paul speaks not only of bringing unity to the Jew and Gentile but also of bringing them back to God, for it is through Christ that we receive the spirit who leads us into the presence of the Father (Vs.18). In Galatians 4:6 Paul tells us that it is this spirit of Christ which teaches us to call God Father. In Romans 8:16 Paul writes that the Spirit makes us God's sons and by the Spirit's power we cry to God "Father, my Father." When Christ's Spirit enters our lives we know God as our loving heavenly Father.

Paul closes this passage by using two word pictures to illustrate the change in status that comes to those who are brought into God's presence through Christ.

In verse 19 he tells us that we are no longer foreigners (Pharengi) but fellow citizens. In Paul's day there were people in every city who were not citizens of that city. They had come from the outside and were regarded with suspicion and dislike. They had to pay a special tax and could stay in the city only on sufferance. Paul says to the Gentiles that they are no longer living under sufferance but are now citizens of God's Kingdom with the same rights as other citizens. Paul knew the value of Roman citizenship in that day and was saying to the Gentiles that they were now citizens of a greater Kingdom. Paul goes further

than this though. He says that the Gentiles are now full members of the family of God. He uses the same Greek word here that is used in I Timothy 5:8 to describe a man's closest relatives. Jews and Gentiles are now brothers and sisters in Christ, all members of God's great family.

Then in verse 20 Paul uses another word picture to make even clearer the new status Gentile believers had. He says that they are part of a building that has the apostles and the prophets as its foundation and Jesus Christ as its corner stone. Paul amplifies this thought in I. Cor. 3:9b-11. He says in that passage that, while he and others had built, God had made Jesus Christ the foundation of it all. Every Christian is a stone or brick in the building being erected but Christ as the corner stone or key stone is the one who holds the whole building together. (Vs. 21) Just as when the keystone of the arch is removed the whole arch collapses, so if Christ the corner stone of the church is removed, the church will fall in ruins. It is Christ in the church that saves it from being just another organization; Jesus makes the church grow until it becomes a holy temple for the Lord.

Paul closes the passage by reminding the Gentiles once again that they had a part in this building, the church, so that they might become the dwelling place of God, through the work of the Spirit. In I Cor. 3:16 Paul exhorts the Gentiles at Corinth in this way: "Surely you know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you!" (TEV). There is something of this idea in the 22nd verse. The TEV puts it so plainly there is no need to explain: "In union with him you too are being built together with all the others into a house where God lives through his spirit."

What a challenging thought; that every Christian is a part of God's building, that each of us is a building block for God and has something to contribute in building the house where God lives! This building of God's house is going on constantly and every Christian wherever he may be has a share in the building, indeed he is a part of the building. Paul warns in I Cor. 3:13,14 that the quality of our work will be seen on the Judgement Day, so we need to be careful that our contribution to this building is such as will bring honour and glory to God.

Finally we need to note that Paul, using the passive voice, emphasizes the truth that in Him (Jesus Christ) we “are being built together with all the others where God lives through his spirit.” (Verse 22) Here he is telling us his understanding of what God is doing with us, his sons and daughters. It is his plan through Christ to bring people together in a unity which does not depend upon a ritual or a creed or a particular kind of worship service but upon Christ himself. God is using Christ as the mortar or cement to bind us together in a unity where His Spirit can dwell.

Questions for Discussion

1. In India there are so many dividing walls between people : caste, language, religion, region, education, wealth and natural difference such as the generation gap. What about other Asian countries? What divisions are keeping people apart in those countries?
2. Tell us about one wall that you know about that is beginning to fall down.
3. The main message of this chapter is that the Gospel is for everyone. Is there any group of people who would not feel welcome to be members of your own local church? If you have to answer “no” to any of the following questions, what should be done?
 - a. Do educated people feel at home in your church?
 - b. Do working class people (coolies) feel at home in your church?
 - c. Do people of all classes and castes have an opportunity for leadership in your church?
4. In the world where so many people have lost faith in the old gods, how can these people be approached with the Good News Paul is talking about? Through discussion groups? Through social events? Through community welfare programs? If through secular activities, how do we let people know that our desire for their good comes because of our own Christian experience?

CHAPTER III

GOD'S GRACIOUS PURPOSE

A. Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles :

By the beginning of the third chapter of Ephesians Paul has made four important points: 1. God's plan of salvation (1:3-14), 2. Jesus Christ's place in that plan (1:15-23), 3. Salvation is through Christ and is a free gift of God to those who believe (2:1-10), and 4. Jesus Christ, by his death has broken down the barriers which separate people (2:11-21).

Here in the third chapter we find Paul telling us what the discovery of the truths he has shared with us thus far has meant in his life.

The very first sentence in Chapter 3 gives us a glimpse of the great changes that came into his life as the truths of the Gospel worked their way into the secret corners of his heart and did their work. He starts out by making a surprising statement: "I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ." We need to note the preposition he uses here — he says that he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. All of the translations except the RSV give this reading. Now as a matter of fact Paul was, as he wrote this letter, a prisoner of the Roman government under house arrest even though allowed to stay in a house that he had rented. But though living in his own house, night and day he was chained by a length of chain fastened to the wrist of a soldier guard who accompanied him wherever he went. In Phil. 1:12,13 Paul tells us that being chained to his guards gave him a chance to witness to them about Jesus Christ and that the gospel had become known throughout the whole praetorian guard. This freedom to witness concerning Jesus Christ, however, did not change the fact that he was a prisoner.

But Paul, instead of thinking of himself as a prisoner of Rome thought of himself as a prisoner of *Jesus Christ*. Though arrested by the Roman authorities at the instigation of the temple authorities in Jerusalem, Paul blamed neither the Romans nor his fellow country-men—he rather gloried in the fact that he was

suffering for the sake of his belief in Jesus Christ—so he began this section “I paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the sake of you Gentiles.” Even stronger than the chains that bound him to his solidier guard were the chains of love and duty and joyful appreciation which bound him to his Saviour and Lord! And Paul rejoiced in this bondage to Christ. Do we feel bound to Christ as Paul felt or do we fret over the constraints and compulsions our Lord brings to our lives. William Barclay puts the matter well when he comments.

“When we are undergoing hardship, unpopularity, material loss for the sake of Christian principles we can either regard ourselves as the victims of men or as the champions of Christ.”

Here Paul shows us the way - he did not think of himself as the prisoner of Nero but as the prisoner of Christ. He knew that he was not his own, that he had been bought with a price beyond his ability ever to repay - so he writes that he is a “prisoner of Christ.”

At this point Paul is diverted by the thought of his being a prisoner of Christ - this makes him think of the call he received from Jesus Christ on the Damascus road and of the commission he received from Annanias whom God had sent to Paul saying “Go, for I have chosen him to serve me, to make my name known to the people of Israel.” Acts 9:15 (TEV) So in verses 3:2-13 Paul's thought goes off at a tangent and it is only at verse 14 that he returns to his central theme.

Even though this section is a parenthesis it is important because here Paul tells us why he began to preach the Good News to the Gentiles. Paul says that he began to do this because “God revealed his secret plan and made it known to me.” (3:3 - TEV). In verse 6 Paul tells us what this secret is. “The secret is this: by means of the gospel the Gentiles have a part with the Jews in God's blessings, they are members of the same body, and share in the promise that God made in Jesus Christ.” (TEV)

What Paul is saying here is an expansion of what he said in 1:10. Here he is uncomfortably specific in stating that the meaning

of Christ's coming into the world is to make God's salvation available to all men - and not to the Jews alone. This was a shocking idea not only to the Pharisees who stressed the keeping of the Law but also to all Jews everywhere. In the minds of the Jews justification before God could only come by keeping the law. This idea carried over into the early church and was responsible for the disputes Paul had with the Judaizers who went about saying that before Gentiles could become Christians they had to first become Jews (and by implication keep the Law). These Judaizers could not bring themselves to believe that Gentiles who had never kept the Law could share in God's new covenant given through Jesus Christ.

But when Paul came to understand the meaning of God's Grace he understood this mystery, this secret hidden from mankind until then that no man by his good works could ever justify himself in God's sight. The only justification open to us is justification by faith in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. And this faith is available to all people, to Gentiles as well as Jews. In Romans 10:8 and 9 Paul puts the matter this way:

"God's message is near you, on your lips and in your heart; that is the message of faith which we preach. If you confess with your lips 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved." (TEV)

Until this mystery was revealed to Paul no one had dared to think that God's love and grace and salvation were for all of the people of the world. It was Paul's proclamation of this truth that made Christianity a universal religion; if it had not been for Paul's understanding of what God wants to do for the world through Jesus Christ, the Christian church would not have broken the bonds of narrow racial bigotry and people of all races and tongues would not now be gathered together in Christ's church to praise Him.

Then Paul goes on in verses 7 and 8 to rejoice that he had been given the privilege of preaching to the Gentiles regarding the infinite riches of Christ. The word translated "infinite" in the TEV is translated "unfathomable" in the NEB and "incalculable"

by Phillips. What Paul is speaking about is the treasure house of riches, beyond our ability to completely grasp or understand, that we find in Christ's life and teachings. The more we know and experience Christ the richer our blessings; but no one, no matter how much that person has experienced the riches of Christ, can ever fully comprehend them. This is why John in his Gospel writes "Out of the fulness of his grace he has blessed us all by giving us one blessing after another." (John 1:16, TEV)

We should note that Paul regarded this privilege of sharing this wonderful secret given to him by God as his special gift. I wonder how many of us, when God gives us the opportunity to do something for him, regard this as a privilege or a special gift? Paul's special gift got him into all kinds of trouble: beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, times of hunger and thirst—yet he rejoiced that his special gift from God gave him the privilege of not only sharing the Good News with others, but of suffering for his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In verses 9 and 10 Paul stresses another important teaching about the secret that God had revealed to him. He says first of all that he was "to make all men see how God's secret plan is to be put into effect." This reminds us that Paul was not content simply to preach the Gospel and establish churches. He knew that unless he gave the proper teaching to his new converts they would not remain staunch in their faith. The faith of these new Christians had to be undergirded by a theological understanding of God's plan of salvation. Paul wrote about this in all of his letters and especially so in his letters to Galatians and to the Romans. In both of these letters he deals with the relationship of the Law to God's Grace and to people's faith in Jesus Christ.

It is strange but true that God used Paul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, the one who had as Saul been immersed in legalism ("as for the law blameless") to destroy Jewish legalism which was still lingering in the early church. Just as centuries later Luther and Calvin were to provide a theological rationale for their reformation of the church, so Paul provided the theological rationale for the reformation of the church in his day; for abandoning legalism and good works as the basis for salvation and replacing them with the doctrine of salvation by faith through God's Grace.

In the 10th verse Paul goes on to point out that this was not his responsibility alone but that God intended the church to continue to make known "God's wisdom in all its different forms. Paul did for the Gentiles of his day what needs to be done by the church in our day for new converts coming out of various cultural and religious backgrounds. Indeed this is the supreme challenge which the 20th century world is throwing out at the church today; the world wants to know how God's secret plan is to be put in effect today — not how it was done one hundred years ago, or even thirty years ago. Unless God's plan can be explained in language that people today understand and appreciate there can be no communication between Christians and non-Christians.

Jesus commanded us not only to make disciples and to baptize them but also to teach them to observe the things he commanded us to do. All too often the church here in India and in other parts of the world has neglected its teaching role, and so large numbers of children, young people and adults really do not know the essentials of our faith, much less how God's plan for the salvation of the world is to be put into effect.

The reference to "angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly realm" is difficult for 20th century men to understand for it reflects men's understanding of the cosmos in the first century. It was believed then that the sun, moon and stars were fixed in their places on transparent spheres that moved around the earth. Since the then known seven planets seemed to have movements independent of the spheres the Greeks and others speculated that the planets were the sovereign rulers of the spheres. Paul referred to these powers in 1:21 when he wrote "Christ rules there (in heaven) above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers and lords! He is above all titles of power in this world and the next."

So when Paul writes in verse 10; "... by the church the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might know God's wisdom in all its different forms," he is saying that the church, by its preaching of the Gospel, was freeing men from the fear and power of any authority or spiritual power except that of Christ. Over and over again as the Gospel has been preached to people living in superstition and fear and spiritual darkness men

have found freedom from the evil powers which previously ruled their lives.

Verse 11 reminds us that the bringing of his salvation to the Gentiles was not an after thought but was "according to his eternal purpose which he made come true in Christ our Lord." We find this same thought expressed beautifully in I Timothy 1: 9, 10:

"He saved us and called us to be his own people, not because of what we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. He gave this grace to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but now it has been revealed to us through the appearing of Christ Jesus our Saviour." (TEV)

No matter our colour, nation or race, God shows no favoritism. From the beginning God has desired the salvation of all people. Jesus confirmed this teaching when he said to his disciples that it is not the will of our heavenly Father that any of these little ones should be lost."

Paul closes this paranthetical passage with a statement that is a part of the experiences of all of us living in India. He says that through Jesus Christ we have free access to God. (Verse 12) Many of us when we have had business with some important person such as an official of the government have first sought out a mutual acquaintance or friend who could introduce us to the officer and put in a good word for us. With the friend leading us we can go directly into the presence of the officer without the friend we will spend hours in the waiting room. In Hebrews we find the same idea: "And so he (Jesus) is able now as always to save those who come to God through him, because he lives forever to plead with God for them." (Heb. 7:25, TEV) What a wonderful thought: in the company of Jesus Christ there is always an open door into the presence of God, and this door is never closed in our faces !

B. Paul's prayer that his readers may have God's power and love

In verse 14 Paul takes up again the thought which he started to express in the first verse of this chapter. He writes, "For this

reason," and in doing so he is referring to the idea expressed in verses 2:11-22. Paul has understood that through Jesus Christ all of the prejudices and pride and perfidy which divide people and rend society and trouble mankind can be brought to an end if the peoples of the world are willing to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. It is God's intention that through Christ men shall be reconciled to one another. Furthermore, Paul sees the church as God's instrument to bring about this reconciliation. The church is the bearer of the Good News that the barriers separating people have been destroyed by the love God has shown to the world through Jesus Christ.

Understanding this glorious purpose of God, Paul says in verses 14, 15: "I fall on my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth receives its name." There are four ideas worth pondering in this short sentence. First of all Paul says, "I fall on my knees..." The common posture assumed by the Jews while praying was to stand with arms lifted up towards heaven. But Paul does not pray in this fashion; he prostrates himself before the Father. Why does Paul pray in this manner? William Barclay suggests that "Paul's prayer for the church is so intense that he prostrates himself before God in the agony of his entreaty."

Those of us living in India know what this prostration symbolizes. When anyone prostrates himself before you it means a complete submission to your will. Paul's concern for those he had won for Jesus Christ and for the churches that he had established was so intense, so heartfelt, that he had to find an outward expression for these feelings. When we pray for our Christian brethren, for our friends and our church and our pastor and our neighbors is our prayer perfunctory or do we pray in a way that shows God we really mean what we are praying?

Secondly, Paul says that he prostrates himself "before the Father." This is the name that Paul had become accustomed to use for God in his prayers. Perhaps Paul fell into this habit from using the Lord's Prayer in worship. More probably he began to pray to God as Father because he learned to think of himself as a son of God because of what Christ had done for him. The use

of the term, "Father" in his praying implies an intimacy in his approach to God that an orthodox Jew would not have dared assume. Through Jesus Christ Paul found a new relationship with God. This relationship Paul boldly declared in the very beginning of this letter: "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ." (1:5) RSV Since we *are* his sons because of our faith in Christ it is only natural that we should think of God as our Father and pray to Him thus.

Thirdly, we have in verse 15 the phrase "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." (TEV & RSV) The Jerusalem Bible puts it this way: "from whom every family whether spiritual or natural takes its name." This Jerusalem Bible translation brings out clearly the idea that every family in the world must trace its origins back to that first family created by God to occupy the Garden of Eden. Elsewhere Paul voices the same idea when he says;

"From one man he created all of the races of man-kind and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed before hand the exact times and the limits of the places where they should live. He did this so that they would look for him as they felt around for him. Yet God is actually not far from any of us; as someone has said,

'In him we live and move and exist'."

—Acts 17:26-28

In other words, families as we know them are a part of God's great plan for mankind and God himself is the ideal model or pattern for all fathers. Francis Beare explains this idea thus in the *Interpreters Bible*:

"His (the Father's) relation to his children is the pattern of all other social relationships. The fellowship of race or of nation or natural kin is but the shadow of the eternal fellowship of the children of God with the one Father of them all and with one another."

So we fathers find a tremendous responsibility placed on our shoulders when we teach our children to call God father. The

only understanding our children have of this word, father, comes from the conduct and behavior and attitudes shown to them by us, their earthly fathers.

Men, when our children look at us, do they find in our lives anything that will help them to understand their Father in Heaven? We as human father must strive to be like our Heavenly Father if our children are to know Him.

Finally, in this verse we find these words : "from whom every family on earth receives its true name." From this I understand Paul to be saying that every family in the world, whether they know it and recognize it or not, has a relationship to God and comes under His loving care and lives by His Grace. Paul had something like this in mind when he wrote in Romans 2 : 14 & 15 :

"The Gentiles do not have the Law, but whenever they do by instinct what the Law commands, they are their own law, even though they do not have the Law. Their conduct shows that what the Law commands is written in their hearts. Their consciences also show that this is true, since their thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them." (TEV)

We now come to the petitions Paul says he is making on behalf of his readers. These are five in number and each one deserves careful attention. Let us therefore look at each one briefly.

In verse 16 Paul asks God from the wealth of his Glory "to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves." Various commentators describe the "inner man" in different ways. William Barclay thinks that Paul was referring to the Greek idea and therefore says that the term includes a man's reason, his conscience and his will. If the reason is strengthened we can more easily distinguish right from wrong ; if the conscience is strengthened we will not easily fall into temptation ; if the will is strengthened then, knowing what is right, we will be able to do it.

On the other hand, Francis Beare says that according to Pauline usage the inner man is "the highest part of our nature by

which we delight in the law of God.” By this he means that part of us which understands spiritual truths and grasps eternal verities and desires to live by them.

Secondly, we need to note that Paul connects the strengthening of the inner man with the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the clear teaching of Jesus himself. In Acts 1 : 8 Jesus promised his disciples that “when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power.” The power in the life of the Christian comes from the Holy Spirit at work in us ; if there is no power in our lives to resist temptation or to live the holy life or to witness for Jesus Christ then it is certain that we have not allowed the Holy Spirit to come into our lives. The early Christians were a Spirit filled people therefore they were a power filled people.

Thirdly, Paul says that this empowering comes out of the wealth of God’s Glory. The Holy Spirit is part of God’s Glory and when the Spirit is a part of our lives we then know something of God’s Glory. When Stephen was being martyred we read this significant statement in Acts 7 : 55 :

“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God’s Glory.”

This is one of the gifts of the Spirit the ability to experience and understand the Glory of God. Thousands of people who have become part of the modern charismatic movement testify that through the experience of the Holy Spirit they have been brought into the presence of the Glory of God in a way they had never known before. I can testify from my own personal experience that once a person has experienced that Glory he can never be the same again.

In verse 17 we find the second of Paul’s petitions : “I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith.” We must not think that Paul is praying to Christ to come into the hearts of his readers. He doesn’t have to make that prayer for we read in Revelation 3 : 20 that Christ is anxious to come into every man’s heart :

“Listen ! I stand at the door and knock and if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into his house and eat with him and he will eat with me.”

Paul is here beseeching us to let Christ have a chance in our lives. The emphasis here is on faith. He prays that “through faith” Christ will come into our hearts. John Calvin, when commenting on the meaning of faith wrote :

“Faith is not a distant view but a warm embracing of Christ who dwells in us.”

William Barclay reminds us that the Greek word translated “dwell” is *katoikein* which means a permanent residence and not a temporary one. One of the verses of that familiar hymn, “Abide with Me” by William Lyte ends with this significant line :

“Come not to sojourn, but to abide with me.”

This is what Paul wanted for his readers ; the blessing of having Christ as the permanent guest in their hearts.

In the last part of verse 17 Paul prays for another great gift for his readers. “I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love.” Love is a recurring theme in this letter. In the first chapter Paul says that God “destined us in love”. (1 : 5) In the same chapter he writes “I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love towards the saints.” (1 : 15) In the second chapter he reminds us that God’s “love for us was so great that while we were spiritually dead..... he brought us to life with Christ.” So we are not surprised that Paul prayed that the lives of his readers should be grounded in love. I Corinthians 13 tells us what it means to live a life which is grounded in love. We need to remember Paul’s priorities ; though he places a great emphasis upon faith he tells us plainly that without love we are nothing. Love is and must be the foundation of Christian living. Faith without love is not enough.

The importance Paul gives to love is seen in his petition in verse 18 :

“ ... so that you, together with all of God’s people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep is Christ’s love. ”

We must not quibble here by arguing that geometry knows but three dimensions while Paul uses four to describe love. John Allan in the *Torch Bible Commentary* on Ephesians reminds us that the unsophisticated mind naturally thinks of the world as Paul describes love ; as having length and breadth, height and depth. What is important is to see behind Paul’s words to his real meaning. Paul is saying that there is no place in all of God’s creation that is not encompassed by his purpose and filled with his love. One of our Christian choruses expresses this idea of the vastness of God’s love beautifully :

“ Could I with ink the oceans fill,
And were the sky of parchment made ;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade ;
To write the love of God above
Would drink the ocean dry ;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though it were stretched from sky to sky. ”

In verse 19 Paul gives us the reason for such a prayer. He says that only by comprehending God’s love can we come to be filled with the nature or fullness of God. Since God is love we can not really know God until we know and live by His love. The fullness of God represents in Paul’s mind the culmination of all the petitions we have mentioned previously. Paul desires that there should be a continuous spiritual growth in the lives of all who read this letter. They must not remain babes in Christ but must become mature Christians. Though Paul writes in Colossians 2:9, 10 :

“ For the full content of divine nature lives in Christ, in his humanity, and you have been given full life in union with him ” :

he also says in Philippians 3:12:

“I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to himself.”

This is the paradox of the Christian life: though in principle this fullness of God has already been given to each believer yet in practice this gift still has to be realized more and more completely in our lives as Christians as we grow in grace and love. Only the love of Christ at work in our lives will help us continue to grow spiritually and thus be filled with the fullness of God.

Paul closes this wonderful prayer with a doxology. (verses 21-22) This doxology contains two great thoughts. First of all he says that the power at work in us through the Holy Spirit is able to help us do things for God beyond our wildest imaginings. When William Carey came to India, neither he nor any one else thought that this self-educated shoe-maker would be able during his lifetime to see to the translation of the Bible into so many different languages: yet Carey, who called himself a “simple plodder” was able to do with God’s help what no one had thought it possible to do before. Carey believed what Paul taught, and so he preached that great sermon “Attempt Great Things for God, Expect Great Things from God”. No man knows what God can do with his life until he surrenders that life to the power of God!

Finally, Paul says: ...“to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations.” Paul had faith to believe that the work he had begun would stand. He worked not for momentary satisfactions but for eternal truths. Because he believed that what he was doing had lasting meaning, he dug deep foundations and built as a wise master builder. The result was that all of Europe was introduced to Jesus Christ and the citizens of the Roman Empire were seized by the Gospel in such a way that they could not escape from its grip on their lives. What is needed in the 20th century are more people who will believe as Paul did that their witness for Christ has eternal meaning and who will strive to glorify the church and Jesus Christ as they serve their fellow human beings.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is your church doing to spread the Good News?
Do you have evangelistic projects for your men? your women? Your youth?
Have you tried neighborhood Bible Schools for children?
Have you tried neighborhood Bible study groups for adults?
What are some of your members doing as individual to spread the Gospel?
2. The role of a servant is a difficult one to accept; no authority, no freedom, no status; yet Paul accepted it with joy because of his love of Jesus Christ. What are the characteristics of a good servant?
3. If your pastor fulfills the role of a servant to his people, what can your church members do to protect him so that he has time for his role as a teacher and a preacher?
4. Think of someone you know who manages to combine the role of a servant and Christian witness. What is the secret of that person's life?
5. Paul writes of the importance of prayer in the first verse as well as in the last paragraph of this chapter.
He prays that we may be filled with power and love.
 - a. What can we do to be filled with power from God.
 - b. What are the fruits of this power in the lives of people you know?
 - c. There are Christians in all parts of the world and in all denominations who say they are experiencing the Holy Spirit. If you know of individuals or churches who have been blessed by this experience please tell us about it.
(We don't want to hear about those where it has created problems.)
6. By studying the last section of chapter three, what did you learn about your own prayer life?
7. Summarize the characteristics of a Christian as given in the whole of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORTHY LIFE

A. A Call for Unity

We now begin, in the fourth chapter, the practical application of Paul's theological teaching to every day living. As Paul does in Romans, Galatians and Colossians, so he does in Ephesians. After the initial doctrinal teaching Paul gives his readers instructions as to how to put his teachings into practice. It is in this section that we find Paul's ethical teaching on a number of subjects.

Since the unity of the church is Paul's main theme in the letter, we are not surprised to find him slanting his teaching on various matters dealt with in the last three chapters so as to emphasize the importance of maintaining unity in the Christian church.

In verse 1. Paul emphasizes the importance of the worthy life. The thought here is not that we must be worthy to deserve salvation but rather that we must live worthily so as to fulfill God's purpose for us when he called us. So the TEV translation, "...live a life that measures up to the standard God set when he called you," is better than most other translations. Notice that Paul has every right to urge upon his readers worthy living for he is writing as a prisoner "because I serve the Lord." Paul understood that each Christian was called to have a share in fulfilling God's great design for the universe. What a wonderful truth to live by; each one of us has his or her own part in building the Kingdom of God!

In verse 2, Paul mentions specific qualities in the life of a Christian that are necessary if we are to measure up to God's standard. These are all qualities which spring from Christian love in human hearts; humbleness, gentleness, patience, and tolerance. Not only are these the fruit of Christian love in our lives, but as we shall see in verse 3, these are the very qualities needed to protect Christian unity. Paul knows that if Christian unity is to be maintained within the church, every member of the Christian fellowship needs to cultivate these qualities in their lives.

Let us look at these qualities born out of Christian love. The first quality, "humility" or "humbleness" was not regarded as a virtue in the ancient world. In fact, when Paul wanted to express this idea he had to coin a new Greek word. He took a Greek adjective usually associated with nouns carrying the idea of ignobility or servility and converted it into a word which eventually became synonymous with a great Christian virtue. Paul points to Christ as the supreme example of humility when he writes in Philippians 2:7: (TEV)

"Instead of this, of his own free will, he gave up all he had and took the nature of a servant. He became like man and appeared in human likeness."

When we think of this Christian virtue of humbleness Francis of Assisi comes to mind. He gave up a life of frivolous luxury to serve Christ. Or we remember Francis Xavier, that great Roman Catholic Jesuit missionary to India. Though armed with special authority from both the Portuguese king and the Pope he refused to be carried in a palanquin through the streets of Goa when he landed but walked in a simple garb barefoot to the hospital where he prayed for the sick there and personally washed the sores of lepers.

The second virtue mentioned is translated "gentle" in the TEV and "meekness" in the KJ and RSV. William Barclay reminds us that this is the translation of a word used by Aristotle to describe a man who had learned to control his temper. It is also the word used for an animal that had been trained to obey its master. Barclay says that a man who is gentle is

"...the man who is so God controlled that he is always angry at the right time but never angry at the wrong time; he is a man in whom self has died and whose whole life is directed and controlled by God."

Paul himself describes the fruit of Christian gentleness or meekness when he wrote in Galatians 2:19c, 20:

"I have been put to death with Christ on his cross so that it is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me." (TEV)

Christ living in us produces a gentleness, a meekness in our lives that natural man does not have. Christ helps us to be angry over sin but keeps us from sinning in our anger. His gentleness in our hearts helps us to go the second mile and to turn the other cheek. It was this quality of meekness that Mahatma Gandhi tried to inculcate in his followers through the Satyagraha Movement.

The third quality is translated "patience" in the RSV and the TEV and "long suffering" in the KJ. These are translations of a Greek word which describes the spirit which never admits defeat or the forbearance of a man who refuses to retaliate. It is the quality in a person which makes him bear injury and insult and bitterness without complaining. It is the theme of the Negro spiritual which tells about the trial and crucifixion of Jesus with these words as its chorus :

"He never said a mumblin' word,
Not a word, not a word, not a word!"

Patience is the spirit in a Christian which enables him to beat with people's foibles and the irritating things they do without complaint.

But most of all we find meaning for this word, patience, in the way the New Testament uses the word regarding God and Jesus Christ. Paul asks in Romans 2:4 (RSV) :

"... do you presume upon the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience? "

In I Timothy 2:16 Paul writes,

"... but God was merciful to me in order that Christ Jesus might show his full patience in dealing with me." (TEV)

Again in Romans 9:22 Paul says that God

"... wanted to show his anger and make his power known. But he was very patient in enduring those who were the objects of his anger." (TEV)

Peter says in his second epistle :

"Look on our Lord's patience as the opportunity he is giving you to be saved." (II Peter 2:15, TEV)

From these references we can understand that if we are to be like our heavenly Father we must show to others the same patience that he has shown toward us. Theodore Wedel puts the matter well in the *Interpreter's Bible* when he writes :

“The drama of the Cross upon which our Christian faith rests, is the story of God himself submitting to lowliness, meekness and patience.”

As we look at these qualities which Paul mentions in verse 2, we can understand that they are needed to maintain the unity of the church and fellowship with one another. They are not the qualities of a weakling but those of a disciplined mature and strong Christian who has learned from Christ how to deny himself. Only those who have taken up their crosses to follow their Lord can show these qualities of love to others.

The fourth quality Paul mentions is tolerance. It is translated “forbearing one another” in the KJ and RSV. There are at least two reasons why Christians should be tolerant. First of all Jesus said in Matthew 7:1

“Do not judge others so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you in the same way you judge others.”
(TEV)

As human beings limited in our understanding of others' situations we run grave risks if we presume to judge them. Only God knows the whole story and therefore is competent to judge justly.

Secondly we should hate the sin but not the sinner. As a member of the body of Christ we are not here to condemn but to help those who have gone astray find their way back into God's presence. So Paul advises Timothy :

“... the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God will perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth.” (II Timothy 2:24, RSV)

So, for the sake of others and for our own sakes we must forbear and be tolerant of one another. At the end of verse 2. we should note that Paul says this quality of forbearance comes from love. The Greek word used by Paul here is *agapē*, which has been defined as unconquerable benevolence. If we have this kind of good will towards others, nothing that they can do will make us want to harm them. Jesus Christ typified this unconquerable benevolence when, hanging from the cross, he prayed: "Forgive them Father, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34, TEV)

In verse 3 Paul takes up the theme of unity itself. He states plainly that we have an obligation to maintain.

"...the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace which binds you together." (TEV)

Paul emphasizes our obligation by using a word translated "be eager" in the RSV, "do your best" in the TEV and "do all you can" in the *Jerusalem Bible*. Paul knew that though Christian unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit it has to be kept and protected by individual Christians. The sad experience of the church since Paul's day is that too few Christians have consciously worked to protect the unity of the church. So the church in our day is fragmented and weakened by divisions which have destroyed the unity Jesus prayed for.

The phrase "by means of the peace which the Spirit gives" reminds us that in Galatians 5:22 Paul lists peace as one of the fruits of the Spirit. In Philippians 4:9 Paul speaks of God as the one who gives us peace. Since this is true, this peace in our hearts and lives should make us one with our fellow Christians.

In verses 4 to 6 Paul shows us the basis upon which our Christian unity is founded. In this passage he repeats the word "one" seven times in a formula which relates the unity of the church to the unity of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul takes the theme of the Shema which was repeated daily by every devout Jew (See Deuteronomy 6:4) and expands it to encompass the whole of the Gospel. In doing so he mentions seven important points

that all Christians have in common. Let us look at these seven points Paul makes.

1. "There is one body". The church is the body of Christ and since Christ is one he can have but one body. This oneness of the church is not founded on any organization but, as Barclay says, it is a "oneness founded on a common love of Christ and of every part for the other."

2. "There is one Spirit". Many Bible scholars believe that the real birth of the Christian church took place on the Day of Pentecost as the disciples were gathered in the upper room. The Spirit given to the disciples then was the one Spirit of Christ. Every member present received the same Spirit. One of the reasons why many Christian congregations these days seem more dead than alive is simply that the members of these congregations have lost contact with the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit at work in our churches that convicts people of their sins, changes lives, and leads people to serve their fellow men. It is God's Spirit in the church that brings peace and unity to the Christian congregation. If there is no peace, if people are not serving others, if people are not being saved then we need to gather on our knees and pray for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon us.

3. "There is one hope to which God has called you." If Christians of different denominations and different nations and races could only remember this truth what a change would come over the church. John Allan reminds us that "the same God calls all Christians and the *hope* they enter into when *called* is the hope of the same eternal blessings for all." My hope in Christ is the same as yours, and the call to follow Christ is the same, and if we follow Him in faith we are all going to end up at the Throne of Grace. This is our hope, is it not?

4. "There is one Lord": This confession that Jesus Christ alone is Lord got the early Christians into trouble with the Roman government and is still getting Christians into trouble in our days in various parts of the world. The world has always been reluctant to accept the lordship of Jesus Christ and so Christians from Paul's day until now, from time to time, have had to suffer for

their faith. The early Christians knew that if they denied Christ's Lordship they were denying His power to save them. Peter boldly proclaimed this truth on the Day of Pentecost:

"All of the people of Israel are to know for sure that this Jesus whom you crucified is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah." (Acts 2:36, TEV)

5. "There is one faith": Paul, I believe, is not talking here about a creed, for Christians in Paul's day had not yet developed creeds. Nor was he talking about confessions of faith such as the Augsburg or the Westminster or the Philadelphia confessions. These all belong to a more sophisticated Christianity than Paul knew. For Paul faith meant simply belief in the Lord Jesus' saving power manifested through his death and resurrection, the complete surrender of one's whole life to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

6. "There is one baptism" Paul is not talking about the mode of Baptism though it is almost certain that the early Christians baptized by immersion as the Greek word *baptizo* indicates. Paul is talking about the fact that all Christians are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as a public confession of their faith. From the very beginning the only way to gain admission into the Christian church was by baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

7. "There is one God and Father of all mankind." This statement at one and the same time continues the emphasis Israel made that God is one, and on the other hand breaks with the belief of Israel that the one God was uniquely the God of Israel. When Paul became a Christian he came to understand that God was God of all men, that He is the Father of all. Paul uses the phrase "God and Father" more than twenty times in his epistles. This emphasis upon God as Father comes from Jesus himself. Even a casual glance at a concordance of the Bible will reveal that the word "Father" was Jesus' favorite name for God. The fact that God's love includes all people is stated categorically in John 3:16. "God loved the world (i.e. the people in the world) so much that he gave his only son..." (TEV) This is the most unique thing about God; He is everyone's loving Heavenly Father.

Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son drives this truth home with an unforgettable word picture. The prodigal son "was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity and he ran and threw his arms around his son and kissed him." (Luke 15:20, TEV) What a picture of the one God who is Father of us all! How can we ignore such a loving Heavenly Father?

Paul closes this fifth verse by saying that this one God "works through all and is in all." (TEV) When Paul uses the words "through all" he is expressing his belief that the creator God is in His world guiding, directing and sustaining it while he carries out His will for mankind. By the phrase "in all" Paul is expressing his conviction that God is present in all of life. He states this idea more explicitly in Romans 8:28:

"We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose." (TEV)

B. Special Gifts

With verse 7 Paul takes up a new idea, the gifts of grace given variously to different people. Paul starts out by stating, "Each one of us has received a special gift." (TEV) By the use of the word translated "each" in TEV and RSV we understand Paul's conviction that every Christian has been especially endowed by God to carry out some part of the work of building God's Kingdom here on earth. What is this "special gift" which Christ has given to each Christian?

The Living Bible gives us a hint when it translates the word "special gift" in TEV and "grace" in RSV using the words "special abilities". Not everyone can sing well, not all people have the ability to preach well, not every one is good at calling on the sick But Paul says each Christian has been given some special ability which he can use for Christ. Brother Lawrence was a Carmelite monk who lived in the 17th Century. When he entered the monastery in Paris he hoped that he would be given the privilege of serving God in the daily chapel services. Instead he was placed in charge of the monastery kitchen. Though

disappointed he discovered that his "special ability" was working with pots and pans preparing endless meals for his brother monks. But while doing this he found time to meditate on God and began to write down his thoughts. The result was his devotional book, *Practicing the Presence of God* which has been a blessing to countless Christians. We do not even know the names of those who led the services in that Carmelite monastery, but the whole Christian world knows Brother Lawrence whose special ability was kitchen work: None of us can say what will happen when we use our own "special ability" for God for he can take even the most humble ability and use it and us to bless others.

Regarding the quotation from Psalm 68:18 which we find in verse 8, Barclay points out that following the Rabbinic practice of that day Paul has changed the verse slightly. In Psalm 68 it reads: "Thou didst ascend the high mount.....receiving gifts among men." (RSV) But Paul changes it to read "When he ascended on high.....he gave gifts to men." Barclay then comments, "In the Old Testament the conquering king *demand*ed and *received* gifts from men. In the New Testament the conqueror Christ *offers* and *gives* gifts to men. That is the essential difference between the two Testaments."

Vesre 10 is a comment on Jesus' descent to earth as the Babe of Bethlehem and his ascent to heaven after his resurrection. Paul says that the descent and ascent had to take place to fill the whole world with His presence. The words "descend" and "ascend" remind us of phrases from the Apostle's Creed. Theodore Wedel comments thus on these words:

"No Christianity is conceivable unless it is based on the story of the 'coming down', a rising again and a further descent by way of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Another striking thought in this verse is the phrase "to fill the whole world with his presence." Barclay says this means that when Jesus was bodily present in the world he could only be in one place at a time. But after his resurrection and ascension and the resumption of his glory He, not being limited by a human form, is able to go any place in the world and be in many places

at one time through His Spirit. It is a wonderful, comforting thought that while I am here in India having fellowship with Jesus Christ my children half way around the world in the United States are also enjoying His fellowship!

In verses 11 and 12 Paul explains what he means by gifts. To do so he names various offices in the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. This does not mean that only these officers had special gifts however, in Corinthians 12:27ff Paul gives another list of people with gifts: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, and speakers in various kinds of tongues. We must not think that Paul confined his list of people with special gifts to the ones mentioned in these two passages. In the First Corinthian passage he begins by saying, "All of you are Christ's body and each one of you is a part of it." The point that Paul is making is that just as those whom he mentioned were to use their gifts to build up the church, so every Christian must use his own particular gift for the same purpose. John Allan puts it well when he writes, "Christ gives his gifts to specific men and in so doing gives these gifted men to the Church."

In verse 12 Paul tells us what happens when we use our special gifts to build up the body of Christ. He says that through these gifts God's people will be prepared "for the work of Christian service." The Greek word translated "prepared" in TEV and "equipping" in the RSV was used by the Greeks when speaking of setting a broken bone or repairing a torn net or when they spoke of disciplining an offender. The basic meaning of the Greek word *kartatizein* from which the word is derived is to set things right. Therefore we can understand that Paul is saying here that the officers of the church, using their God given gifts, must see that the members are taught and lead in a way that will help them become the kind of people God wants them to be. This is what Paul means by building up the body of Christ. How many of the officers in our churches understand their duty in this way? How many realize that it is their duty as officers to work for the good of all members?

Having made this point Paul goes on to say in verse 13 that the result of all this will be the bringing of people together in

“oneness of faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God.” (TEV) Paul is not speaking of a body of belief to which all must hold but the oneness of faith which all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour have. Evidence for this is found in the last part of the verse where he speaks of our knowledge of the Son of God. This knowledge of the Son only comes to those who have faith in Him.

Paul closes this verse with a tremendous word picture. He says “we shall become mature people reaching to the very height of Christ; full stature.” (TEV) All of us remember how, as we were growing up and approaching the stature of our parents, we used to stand back to back to them to see who was the taller. Paul says that these diverse gifts given to various Christians are intended to help us grow up to be as tall as Jesus Christ! When we look at ourselves in a mirror, do we ever ask ourselves how far we have to go to be as tall as Christ, spiritually speaking?

Paul continues this thought in verse 14 when he says that when we have become grown up adults in Christ then we will not, like children, believe everything we hear being taught about our Christian faith, nor will be easily swayed by some smooth talker into accepting false teachings. We will be mature enough to be able to distinguish between Christian truth and the lies of the devil. We will not let ourselves be led away from Christ by false teachers.

In verse 15 Paul contrasts the childish behaviour he described in verse 14 with the behaviour of a mature Christian who has learned to speak the truth in the spirit of love. It must be admitted with shame that in the past, and even now sometimes, Christians have opposed untruth, not with love but with anger and hatred. John Allan in the *Torch Bible Commentary* says that “All contending for truth against heresy must be in love.” Martin Luther was a man ahead of his time when he advocated that heretics should not be dealt with by burning them at the stake as the church was then doing, but by seeking to dissuade them with love and kindness regarding their wrong ideas.

Notice that in this 15th verse Paul also makes Christ the measure of our spiritual achievements. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote in Philippians 3:13, 14:

“Of course, my brothers, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God’s call through Christ Jesus to the life above.” (TEV)

No matter how much we grow up, spiritually speaking, Jesus is always there ahead of us encouraging us on to greater achievements for him!

Verse 16 is a very complicated verse in Greek and so it is almost impossible to make an easily understood translation. Probably the *Living Bible* paraphrase gives as good an understanding of the meaning as we can find :

Under his direction the whole body is fitted together perfectly and each part in its own special way helps the other parts so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

The body in this verse is the church and what Paul says is another way of emphasizing the theme of unity which we find in this letter.

C. The New Life in Christ

The balance of this chapter and the first twenty verses of the fifth chapter are devoted to comparing the Christian’s life with the life lived by non-Christians. Actually Paul uses the same word that we have been translating Gentile up to this point to refer to non-believers in the rest of this chapter and the first part of the next. In the first part of his letter he was comparing Jewish Christians with non-Jewish Christians. Now he is contrasting Christians as a group with non-Christians.

In verse 17 Paul insists that the Christian must no longer live the life of a non-believer. The reason Paul gives is that the non-believers have been lead astray by the futility of their minds” (RSV) or, as the TEV puts it, by “thoughts that are worthless.” Paul amplifies this idea in Romans 1:21 and 22 :

"They know God, but they do not give him the honor that belongs to him, nor do they thank him. Instead, their thoughts have become complete nonsense, and their empty minds are filled with darkness. They say they are wise, but they are fools..." (TEV)

Verses 18 and 19 contain a description of the moral condition of the pagan world. Phillips translates the phrase in the TEV. "They have lost all feeling of shame" with the stronger statement, "They have stifled their consciences." We all know people, who have fallen into sin and continue to do wrong even though their conscience tells them not to do the thing they are doing. Such people these days often end up under the care of a psychiatrist when what they really need is the forgiveness that Jesus Christ alone brings to mankind.

In verses 20 to 24 Paul contrasts the shameless life of the non-Christians described above with the life that true Christians have learned to live through Jesus Christ. What he says here is said more plainly in II Corinthians 5:17: "When anyone is joined to Christ he is a new being. The old is gone, the new has come." (TEV)

From verse 25 until the end of the chapter Paul discusses various virtues which Christians should cultivate and vices they should shun. It should be noted that both the virtues and the vices have a direct bearing on the theme of this letter, Christian unity.

In verse 25 he says that Christians should not lie because we are all members of one another. In verse 26 he warns against anger which so easily leads to sin and the destruction of Christian unity. In verse 27 he seems to be saying that when we become angry and lose our temper we are giving the Devil a chance to do what he wants in our lives. In verse 28 he gives a thoroughly Christian reason for the thief to stop his stealing: so that he can earn an honest living and help those who are in need. In verse 29 Paul warns Christians against using foul and insulting language because he says it is our duty to speak in such a way so as to help people and not to harm them.

In verse 30 Paul's statement, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit" (RSV) is a reminder that sins against the Christian fellowship are in reality sins against the Spirit of Christ. Anything that destroys Christian fellowship is an affront to the Holy Spirit whose mission it is to maintain unity in the church which Christ established. (See 2 : 18 and 4 :3).

Verses 31 and 32 give us a vivid contrast between the life lived by those without Christ and those who are trying to live their lives in Christ. On the one hand bitterness, passion and anger ; on the other hand kindness, tenderness and forgiveness. Notice that Paul follows Jesus in teaching that we should forgive others, but he gives a different reason. Jesus said we should forgive if we want to be forgiven, (Matt. 6 : 15) but Paul says we must forgive because we have been forgiven! Because God has forgiven us through Jesus Christ we should forgive others. (See Matthew 18 : 23-35). The reason for this is plain; only by our being willing to forgive one another can Christian unity be maintained.

Questions for Discussion

1. What Christians do you know who are using their gifts for building up the church? Tell us about some who are neither pastors nor teachers.
2. Paul speaks of the unity of the body of Christ. Do you know of situations where people of different denominations have tried to form or have formed a united church on the local level? What were the problems encountered? If success was achieved, what were the factors in the success and what are the fruits of the union?
3. Paul, like James, was aware of the great harm caused by the tongue speaking falsehood or used in anger or with spite. We all know we should curb our tongues. The question is how? What are some practical measures we Christians can take to deal with this problem?

CHAPTERS 5 & 6

THE CHRISTIAN WALK

A. Be Like God

As was stated in Chapter 4 at verse 17 the first 20 verses in Chapter 5 are a continuation of the theme which begins from 4:17.

The chapter division which cuts off 4:32 from 5:1 while unnatural is fortunate for it makes the opening words of this chapter stand out. I like the NEB rendering of this verse.

“In a word as God’s dear children try to be like him, and live in love as Christ loved you and gave himself up on your behalf as an offering and sacrifice whose fragrance is pleasing to God.”

The picture Paul draws here is a familiar one. What parents have not noticed the way their children try to imitate them? In 4:6 Paul has reminded us that we have one God and Father. Now he tells us that we should try to imitate our Heavenly Father just as our children try to imitate us. Jesus said “You must be perfect—just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48, TEV.)

In verse 2 Paul enjoins us to walk in love, as Christ loved us.” (RSV) John reminds us in 1 John 2:6 “...he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (RSV). He then makes it clear in the rest of the epistle that this walk must be a walk of love. In 1 John 4:8 he says “He who does not love does not know God.” (RSV)

Thirdly Paul says that Christ’s love and his giving of himself for us go together. Loving and giving can not be separated. Because the mother loves her child she gives herself to the child. So John says “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only son”. (John 3:16a, TEV) Love such as this is a sweet smelling offering far more fragrant than the costliest incense says Paul.

In verses 3 to 5 Paul deals with the matter of sexual behaviour. Here Paul says that sexual immorality is so bad that these

things must not be a matter for gossip or crude joking by Christians. It is a fact that before the coming of Christianity chastity was hardly known to the Roman world. It was the accepted thing for men to have mistresses and consort with temple prostitutes. Gentile converts came out of that kind of society and so Paul had to plead with them to lead pure lives. Verse 4 is an injunction which many Christians seem to have forgotten. How often when Christians become angry do we hear them using obscene and abusive language! Paul says such language is not fitting for a Christian, the reason being that Jesus never used such language himself. John Allan suggests that, since the Greek word for thanksgiving *eucharistia* is a compound of the word grace (*charis*), what Paul really was saying at the end of verse 4 is "let your speech be gracious".

Notice that in verse 5 Paul equates covetousness with idolatry. Calvin wrote that "All covetous men deny God and put wealth in His Place." Men in every generation have been tempted to make their worldly possessions their gods, and the O.T. calls the worship of such false gods adultery. (See Hosea 2:5; Jer. 43:15 ff) This interpretation seems to go well with the closing part of this verse where Paul says such people will have no part in the kingdom of Christ and God." (RSV)

In verse 6 "Do not let any one fool you with foolish words" seems to imply that some were advancing the false argument that since we are saved by faith in Christ it does not matter whether we live the righteous life or not. Paul refers to this argument in Romans 6:1, 2 when he writes:

"Should we continue to live in sin so that God's grace will increase? Certainly not! We have died to sin — how then can we go on living in it?"

It is the clear teaching in both the Old and New Testaments that God's people must be holy because God is holy. If we do not heed this warning we will not escape God's wrath shown to those who are disobedient.

Paul says here in verse 7 that Christians should not associate with such people. In II Corinthians 6:14 he states his reason for such an injunction.

"Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done. How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and darkness live together?" (TEV)

Verses 8-14 show the contrast between darkness and light.

In verse 8 Paul reminds his readers that they used to live in darkness but are now living in the light, since they have accepted Jesus Christ who is the light of the world.

At the close of verse 8 and in verse 9 Paul says that if his readers want a harvest of goodness, righteousness and truth in their lives then they must walk in the light. Paul here is using the imagery of light to stress the high ethical life required of every Christian. Paul expresses the same idea in Romans 13:12,13:

"Let us stop doing things that belong to the dark, and let us take up weapons for fighting in the light. Let us conduct ourselves properly as people who live in the light of day—no orgies or drunkenness, no immorality or indecency, no fighting or jealousy." (TEV)

Verse 13 reminds us of the teaching in John 3:20:

"Anyone who does evil things hates the light and will not come to the light because he does not want his evil deeds to be shown up." (TEV)

This teaches us that the best way to rid society or our country of any thing is to drag the evil out into the light. Recent political history in both America and India has demonstrated the truth that abuse of power can flourish only in the darkness of secrecy. Yes, it is as true today as it was in Paul's day; "light is capable of showing up everything for what it really is." (Phillips, 5:13) Not only is this true of societies and nations, it is true of individuals. No person understands his true condition until the light of Jesus shines into the dark places in his heart and mind. We sing glibly that beautiful hymn, "Light of the World, We Hail Thee," but all too often we really do not want that light focused too sharply on our own lives!

Verse 14 is thought by some commentators to be a verse taken from a very early baptismal hymn. If so the "rising from death" may be a reference to the teaching found in Romans 6:3,4 where Paul says.

"By our baptism we were buried with him and shared his death in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father so we also might live a new life." (TEV)

Paul closes this passage in verses 15-21 by an appeal for his readers "not to live like ignorant people but like wise people." (Vs 15 TEV). From the 17th verse we see that Paul equates ignorant people with fools which reminds us of the comment made on 4:17

Verse 16 is interesting because it seems to echo a statement Paul made in I Corinthians 16 : 8, 9.

"But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me and there are many adversaries."

Paul made good use of every opportunity in spite of the evil time in which he lived and in spite of strenuous opposition to his ministry. Are we making the most of the opportunities that come our way to witness about Jesus Christ?

In verse 17 Paul says we should not just sit around waiting for something to turn up but we should try to find out what God wants us to. Do we ask God each day to show us what he wants us to do before we enter that day's work?

In verse 18 Paul is contrasting the non-Christian religious celebration with the Christian. Just as we often see heavy drinking during festival times in village India, so in Paul's day pagan worship was marked by drinking of much wine which lead to debauchery. Paul knew that people wanted to be filled with something. The non-Christian found his happiness in being filled with liquor while the Christian should find greater happiness in being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Verses 19 & 20 tell us two things about the early church. First of all it was a singing church. In the same way that Christians in India love to sing praises to God so did the early Christians. Secondly it tells us that it was a church that regularly remembered to thank God. Notice that Paul enjoins us to give thanks to God for everything. When things are going well with us it is easy to thank God but when troubles come that is a different thing. Paul was so confident of God's providence at work in the world that he said we should praise God for everything. Do we have this kind of confidence and trust in our Heavenly Father? Paul did - he even praised God for his imprisonment because it gave him an opportunity to witness to members of Caesar's household.

B. The Christian Home

Here in this passage we find Paul's teaching on marriage. From the 21st verse to the end of Chapter 5 Paul discusses the relation that a Christian husband and wife should have to each other using the relation of Christ to his bride the church as the model for the marriage relationship.

Verse 21 states plainly that husband and wife should subject themselves to one another because of their reverence for Christ. Only as we learn to see each other as Christ sees us will we be willing to be subject to one another. Paul explains the meaning of subjection well in Phil. 2:3,4.

"...be humble towards one another always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just your own" (TEV)

Using this as his introduction Paul then goes on to lay down certain principles for a Christian marriage. In verse 22 he admonishes wives to submit themselves to their husbands as to the Lord. Men have often emphasized the first part of this verse and forgotten the second part. When Paul says this submission should be as unto the Lord, he was not talking about submission given to an earthly ruler because of fear, but the submission and surrender Christians make to Jesus Christ because of their love for him. A love motivated submission is not a forced submission but a voluntary submission.

In verse 23 Paul says the husband has the same authority over his wife that Christ has over the church. When we stop to consider the kind of authority Christ has over the church, an authority based on his example and sacrificial love for the church then we can understand the basis of the Christian husband's authority over his wife. Christ uses his authority for the benefit of the church to save it, so the implication is that the husband must use his authority to benefit his wife and family, not simply to have his own way.

Verse 24, with its reference to the complete submission of the wife to the husband has to be understood in the light of the general principle of mutual submission laid down in Verse 21.

From Verse 25 to the end of the chapter Paul takes up the discussion of the husband's duties to his wife. Paul was able to deal with the wife's duties in three verses but it takes him all of eight verses to explain the Christian husband's duties to his wife. This was because in Paul's day neither the Jews, nor the Greeks nor the Romans had a high view of women. Every morning the devout male Jew thanked God that he had not made him "a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." While the husband could divorce his wife at will she had no right to divorce unless he was a leper, an apostate or engaged in a disgusting trade.

The Greek male looked on his wife simply as the bearer of his children and the manager of his house. She was kept in complete seclusion in the way that Muslim women in orthodox Islamic countries are kept in purdah. The Greek sought friendship and sexual pleasure outside of marriage with courtesans and concubines or prostitutes. In the Rome of Paul's day the marriage ties had almost completely broken down. Seneca reports that the women of his day were married to be divorced and divorced to be married. There was no such thing as faithfulness in marriage and even women of noble families were passed from man to man like playthings. So it is no wonder Paul spent more time tutoring the men than he did the women!

In verse 25 the husband is told to love his wife with the same sacrificial love that Christ loved the church. The key words here

are "he gave himself up for her" (RSV) "he gave his life for it" (TEV). From the wife only loving submission is required, but from the husband sacrificial love is demanded. It is plain that Paul shows the more difficult way to the husband!

Verses 26 and 27 are paranthetical statement by Paul explaining the reason why Christ gave his life for the church. Francis Beare says that the figure of speech used is suggested by the ceremonial bath given to the bride before the marriage. We who live in India understand Paul's reference without difficulty because every marriage season our women take part in these ceremonial bath rites. By implication Paul compares the bride's bath to the cleansing of the church, the bride of Christ by Christian baptism.

In verse 28 Paul returns to the main theme by stating that men should love their wives in the way they love their own bodies. If they want meat in their curry then they must see that their wives have meat to eat also. If they want new clothes to wear, then their wives should have new clothes. If they want to go out for a good time then they should see that their wives have a chance to get away from the house and the children now and then. Notice what a strong statement Paul makes here "A man who loves his wife loves himself". (TEV)

In verses 29 and 30 Paul says the Christian husband should take care of his wife in the same way that Christ cares for the church. Here we find Paul elevating the marriage relationship to a very high spiritual level. What greater challenge can husband and wife find than to compare their relationship to each other with the relation Christ has with the church?

Verse 31 is a quotation from Genesis 2:24 in the *Septuagint* (Greek) Old Testament. The quotation is apparently meant to support Paul's statement in verse 28 which implies a close union of interest of the husband with his wife. The point of quoting the verse is found in the phrase "and the two will become one."

In verse 32 Paul applies the phrase "and the two will become one" to Christ and the church. John Allan says Paul is using the word "mystery" in the sense of symbol in that Christian marriage at its best symbolizes the relation of Christ to his bride, the church.

He then goes on to say in verse 33 that the statement also applies to every married couple.

CHAPTER SIX

C. Duties of Children and Parents

Verses 6 : 1-4 give us Paul's teaching on the relation of children to their parents and parents to their children. In Verse 1 Paul, quoting from the fifth commandment, enjoins children to obey their parents. Early Christians regarded disobedience to parents as a sign of the degradation non-Christians had fallen into. In verse 2 he reminds the children that this commandment to honour your father and mother carries the promise of special blessing which he quotes in verse 3.

In verse 4 Paul wisely tells parents that if they expect obedience from their children then they should not provoke their children to anger. We have all seen parents teasing and sometimes taunting their children and then when the children become provoked by such treatment the parents become angry. Notice that this command is directed especially to fathers. Generally the mother has a closer relationship with the children than the father. Some commentators think that Paul wrote this out of his own bitter experience. Paul's final word on the subject is "raise them up in Christian discipline and instruction." Christian discipline starts with love and Christian instruction centers on love, so what Paul is saying here is that we should try to make the love of Christ the restraining, disciplining power in the lives of our children. This is to bring them under the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

D. Slaves and Masters

Slavery was an awful fact in the Graeco-Roman world. It was estimated that there were 60,000,000 slaves in the empire and that in the large cities the number of slaves numbered almost as many as the free citizens. The slave was regarded as a living tool, no better than a beast, though he could talk. It was accepted by all that the master had the power of life and death over the slave and on the whole the slave's life was a wretched one subject as he was to the cruel whims and fancies of his master. Paul writes this passage on the relation of slaves to their masters and masters to their slaves with this back-ground in mind.

It should be noted also that in addition to this passage one should read the short letter to Philemon to understand how Paul applied his Christian teaching to the institution of slavery. While Paul does not attack slavery in this passage in Philemon he does introduce ideas and principles which ultimately destroyed the basic assumptions behind the institution of slavery.

In verse 5 we find Paul addressing slaves as fellow human beings not as chattel. He counsels obedience and sincerity in their relation to their masters and compares it with their relation to Christ. The words "fear and trembling" do not refer so much to their human masters as to Jesus Christ to whom Paul says they are ultimately to answer. (See verse 7 also) Paul uses this phrase in Phil. 2:12 where he speaks of working out your own salvation "with fear and trembling."

In verses 6 & 7 Paul reminds those who are slaves that they must always do their work well because they want to gain the approval not only of their earthly masters but of God who watches their work as "slaves of Jesus Christ". They were not their own—they had been bought not only by their earthly masters but by Jesus, their Lord, who had paid with his life to possess them.

The advice Paul gives to slaves is advice every Christian workman should follow. "Do your work..... cheerfully as though you serve the Lord." Barclay says:

"The conviction of the Christian workman is that every single piece of work he produces must be good enough to show to God."

Do we honour God by the quality of work we turn out in the home, classroom, office or factory? Do people know we are Christians because of the way we carry out our work responsibilities?

In verse 8 Paul reminds his hearers of his belief that God rewards everyone for good work done. This teaching is more clearly stated in I Cor. 3:12-15.

580 In verse 9 Paul tells the slave owners that they must behave in the same way towards their slaves. Paul knew that under civil law the slave had no right to expect any thing from his master, but he is here saying that under the Christian law of love masters must give their slaves the same treatment as they would want to receive from others. Implicit in this statement is Paul's firm belief that slaves were not mere chattels but persons of value in God's sight. In the last part of the verse he puts masters and slaves on the same level when he says they both "belong to the same Master in heaven who judges everyone by the same standard. Paul is really saying here what Peter had to learn, "that God is no respecter of persons." (See Acts 10:34,35) Paul's insistence that slave and master will stand on the same footing before the judgement bar of heaven, and that there is neither slave nor free for we are all one in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:28) was the axe which was to sever the very roots of slavery in human society. Though it took Christianity almost 1900 years to banish slavery from its midst, we must thank God that Paul had the courage to meet this problem in the spirit of Christ and provide Christian teaching which ultimately pierced the hearts of men and convicted them of the sin inherent in slavery.

E. The Christian's Spiritual Warfare

Verses 10 to 20 reflect Paul's belief that the whole universe was a battlefield and that Christians had to contend not only with human enemies but enemies from the demon world. The basic imagery in this passage seems to be taken from Isaiah 59:16-19. Just as many of the villagers of India today still believe in demons and devils and evil spirits, so the people of Paul's day believed that they were contending with evil spirits in this world and the heavenly realm. While many no longer believe in demons and devils we all know that there is an active power of evil in this world. This has been demonstrated as clearly in the 20th Century as it was in the 1st Century. All of us need to be on guard against this evil influence which has brought so much tragedy and suffering to mankind in our lifetime. So Paul's advice to the Christians of his day is worth considering seriously in our day.

In verse 10 Paul reminds us that our strength and power to resist evil comes from the Lord.

In verse 11 Paul says that God has given us spiritual armor to help us resist the tactics of the devil.

In verse 12 Paul says that our battle is not against human enemies but against super-human power, yes even cosmic powers (See comment on 3:10) who originate the darkness in this world.

Verse 13 tells us that it is imperative for us to put on the armor of God if we are to be able to resist evil and stand fast. Properly armed we will be able to keep fighting the battle for righteousness. Without this armor we will go down to defeat.

Barclay suggests that the illustration of the armor came to Paul because even as he wrote the epistle he was chained by his wrist to his Roman soldier guard. Looking at the armor and the equipment of his guard gave him the vivid illustration we find in verses 10 to 17.

“So stand ready with truth as your belt” The truth referred to is the truth of the Gospel mentioned in 4:15 as opposed to false teaching in 4:14. The breastplate is variously referred to as righteousness or integrity. It is interesting to note that Isaiah 11:5 in the Septuagint reads, “He shall be girt about the loins with righteousness and enclosed about the sides with truth.”

The Jerusalem Bible translates verse 15 thus: “...wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace.” This idea is suggested by Isaiah 52:7 which is quoted by Paul in Romans 10:15 “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news.” (RSV)

“At all times carry faith as a shield” in verse 16 speaks of the Christian’s confidence in God “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4, RSV)

Verse 17’s “helmet of salvation” is used as a symbol of the divine love at work in our lives to save us in every situation. What can separate us from this saving love of God? Nothing says Paul:

“For I am convinced that nothing can separate us from his love; neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers or the present or the future; neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38,39, TEV)

Having named all of the parts of the armour of his soldier guard in order to illustrate the spiritual defences which a Christian has for use against temptation and evil influences in his life Paul then goes on to speak of the Christian's most powerful weapon, prayer. In vs 18 he says four things about prayer.

First of all he says we must wage our battle against evil “in prayer”. Too often Christians, when trying to oppose evil, have stooped to un-Christian practices. They forgot to seek God's guidance and direction while fighting for righteousness. Paul says we must “do all of this in prayer, asking for God's help.”

Secondly, Paul tells us that we should “pray on every occasion as the Spirit leads.” Prayer if it is to be effective in our lives must be habitual. If we only pray when we are in trouble then God is unable to guide and strengthen our lives. However if we constantly pray as the Spirit prompts us God can then show us His will moment by moment throughout each day.

Thirdly, Paul says we must be alert and never give up in our praying. Jesus commended persistence in prayer when he told the parable about the widow and the judge. Luke tells us in Luke 18:1 that they “ought always to pray and not lose heart.” This is exactly what Paul is saying here.

Finally Paul says our praying should be unselfish — we must remember others in our prayers. Barclay reminds us that the Jews said, “Let a man unite himself with the community in his prayers.” In Jeremiah 29:7 God admonishes those going into exile thus:

“Work for the good of the cities where I have made you go as prisoners. Pray to me on their behalf because if they are prosperous you will be prosperous too.”

So our prayers must go beyond our own petty concerns and the needs of our families to include God's people and our country and indeed the whole world. No man is an island — we all depend on one another.

In verses 19 and 20 Paul asks his readers to pray that he may be bold to speak for the Gospel. Do we pray for our pastor and church leaders that they may be bold to witness for Jesus Christ? Do we pray for our Christian friends in influential positions that they may say a good word for Jesus? Do we pray for our missionaries that they may be bold in their telling of the Good News? Do we pray that God will make us bold witnesses for Jesus?

Verses 21 and 22 are almost word for word a quotation from Colossians 4 : 7 & 8. We have already noted in the introduction that Tychicus was the bearer of the letter to Colossae as well as this letter. Tychicus is mentioned in Acts : 20 : 4 along with Trophimus as being "the Asians" who accompanied Paul from Greece when he set sail for Troas. In II Timothy 4 : 12 Paul writes that "I have sent Thychicus to Ephesus". We have no way of knowing whether this refers to this trip or a subsequent trip. The only other mention of this man whom Paul calls "our dear brother and faithful servant of the Lord" is found in Titus 3 : 12 where Paul suggests that he is considering sending him to Crete. Tychicus was Paul's handy man ready to go wherever he was needed. Can it be said of us that we are as ready to do God's work as Tychicus was?

Verses 23 and 24 really are a brief summary, in the form of a benediction of the things that Paul has been emphasizing in this letter. The prayer for peace recalls Paul's explanation of the work of Christ in 2 : 15.

"He abolished the Jewish law with its commandments and rules in order to create one out of the two races, one new people in union with himself, this way making peace."

The mention of the word love reminds us of Paul's great wish for his readers expressed in 3 : 19.

“Yes, may you come to know his love although it can never be fully known — and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.”

Paul's mention of faith reminds us of the “shield of faith” “mentioned in 6:16 but more important still of his statement in 2:8: “For it is by God's Grace that you have been saved through faith. The phrase “love with faith” reminds us of Paul's great statement in Galatians 5:6:

“For when we are in union with Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor the lack of it makes any difference at all; what matters is faith that works through love.”

Love and faith together make an unbeatable combination in the life of the Christian. Love without faith to guide and direct can become mere sentiment or a passing fancy. Faith without love to temper it all too often becomes harshly dogmatic. Both are needed in our lives if we are to be well balanced Christians.

Paul closes his benediction with the greatest wish of all — that God's Grace “may be with those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love.” We saw in our discussion of 2:7 that our salvation and acceptance by God as his children is because “of the extraordinary greatness of His Grace.” If we have God's Grace in our lives then we have everything!

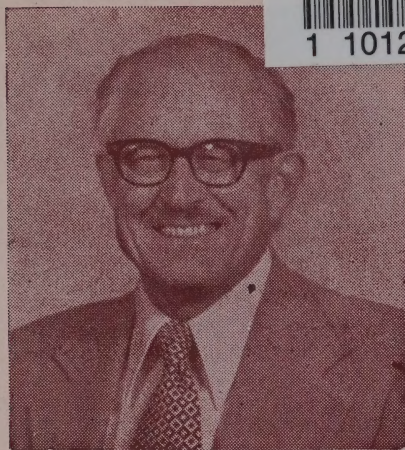
Paul closes this magnificent letter by reminding his readers that this grace is given only to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ “with a love that defies death” as Barclay translates it. Yes, “love so amazing so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.”

Questions for Discussion :

1. Compare and contrast the man — woman and husband-wife relationships among Christians and non-Christians in your countries.
2. We often speak of the generation gap. What changes in the world of today add to this problem? Are any of these changes compatible with Christian beliefs? What can mature Christians (parents, teachers, youth leaders, pastors) do to help ease the tensions?
3. How can Paul's teachings regarding masters and slaves be applied to employee and employer relationships? Can you tell of such an occasion where Christian principles were applied?
4. Does the illustration used by Paul about spiritual warfare speak to your own Christian experience? Do Christians you know appear to be battling with evil in their lives?



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracy Greer Gipson came to India under the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in April 1959 after seven years of pastoral experience in the United States. He has worked in India since then as an evangelical and education missionary except for five years from 1960-1965 when he was pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Salem Oregon. On returning to India in 1965 he served as Director of Evangelism until July, 1968 when he was called to teach Church History and Practical Theology first at Ramapatnam Baptist Theological College, Rajamundry and then at Andhra Christian Theological College, Secunderabad. Dr. Gipson has Theological degrees from Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Berkeley Baptist Divinity School and Yale Divinity School.

India Bible League & Project Philip
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